Kate's Conscience

By IZOLA FORRESTER

Copyright, 1906, by Ruby Douglas

"I think that you ought to tell Willard before you marry him."

Kate did not even turn her head. After listening to variations of the same advice and opinion for half an hour she felt more than annoyed. She was frankly angry and perplexed.

"If you don't some one else will, and that will only make any subsequent explanation so unpleasant. Men are peculiar, anyway, and in an affair of this kind"—

"Imogene Wayne"—Kate's face flushed hotly—"I think you put it altogether too strongly."

"It is a serious matter." Imogene bit off the end of her embroidery linen deliberately. "If it were my own affair I should consider it a matter of conscience. Willard is the sort of man to take anything of that kind to heart. I know him well."

"I don't care a bit whether he knows or not!" exclaimed Kate. "I suppose I should have told him in the first place, but he never asked me, and I didn't consider it necessary. I never thought Bart would."

"No one did," interposed Imogene, with serene significance. "But the fact remains that Bart has"—

"Has what? Am I always in trouble?"

Lazily, comfortably interested, the voice sounded from the inner room whose windows opened on the veranda. Kate stood, silent, indignant, her chin upraised, her lashes downcast. From the cool shadow of the curtained window seat Bart Holman thought her sweeter and dearer than ever. And it had been nearly two years ago.

"Are you in there, Bart?" Imogene laughed. "How long have you been listening—long enough to agree with me? Whatever made you come home when everybody wanted you to stay in Japan?"

"Not everybody. I came by special request."

"And went in the first place by special request too?"

Kate flashed one single glance at her cousin. She had not known how much Imogene knew. She wondered if Bart had told her. Against her will she looked at Bart. He was smiling at her, and suddenly, vaguely, she felt more at ease. After all Bart was a good boy. He had come home the same—a trifle browner, the lines about his mouth a bit deeper, the look of his eyes steadier. The two years in Japan had done him good.

"When is the wedding, Kitty?"

No one ever called her Kitty but Bart. It was such a foolish, childish name for a girl, she thought, for the kind of girl at least that she prided herself on being. She was not the fluffy, childish type. She was tall and slender with smooth dark hair, and eyes that changed like the sea with her mood.

"We are not even engaged yet," she answered composedly. "I can hardly say when the wedding will be."

"Kate is so cautious about matrimony this time," Imogene said amusedly. "She has actually put poor Willard on probation. If he is a good boy for three months and manages to fulfill her ideal in that time, then she will consent to an engagement."

"If I were a girl I'd put Willard on probation for life," Bart said cheerfully. "One would be perfectly safe. There would never be any danger of foreclosure."

"Three months is long enough," said Kate. "A man who cannot stand a three months' test is not worth waiting a lifetime for."

"Don't be vindictive and catty, Kate." Imogene gathered up her melee of embroidery odds and ends. "Everybody at Newpoint knows about you and Bart, and when you twit him that way it is simply bad taste. Bart, why on earth didn't you have sense enough to stay away?"

"No one sent me announcement cards of the probation," answered Bart calmly. "I like Newpoint. Willard and I are old college pals."

"Were you really?" Imogene glanced back over her shoulder to laugh again. "Isn't it comical, though, the whole affair? Well, there is one thing sure, Bart, you won't be pals if Kate's conscience troubles her."

They were alone several minutes before the silence was broken. Then Bart asked:

"Does it?"

"Trouble me?" Kate lifted her head, and the anxiety in her eyes startled him. "Yes, it does, Bart. Of course I intend to marry Willard. The probation idea is half of it, Imogene's nonsense. I only asked him to give me three months to make up my mind."

"I didn't give you three minutes."

"And I changed it in three weeks," she retorted quickly. "It is better to be sure. But"—

"But you haven't told Willard about me?"

"Not yet." She hesitated and then added nervously, earnestly: "It isn't that he would mind, although I suppose he would too. I know I should mind if he had done such a thing and had not told me. But I thought he knew, of course, until one day he told me he didn't believe a girl ever loved more than one man sincerely and absolutely, and he was glad for that reason that I had never been engaged before."

"I agree with him." Bart swung over the barrier of the window ledge that separated them. "I don't believe you'll ever love any one as you did me, Kitty, will you?"

The impersonal frankness of his tone disarmed her. She replied almost gently:

"It was the newness of it all, that's what makes it different. Why, Bart, do you know you were the first man who ever asked me to be his wife? And it seemed so queer. You never said a word, do you remember, just"—

"I remember," said Bart. "It was enough. You gave it back."

"And you brought the ring the very next day to me."

"You gave that back too." He looked at her left hand as he spoke. It was ringless. Willard was certainly on probation. He reached in his inside coat pocket and drew out a small leather case. The color rose in her cheeks as he tossed it over on her lap. She opened it with fingers not quite steady. Bart was watching a figure in gray flannel walking up the board walk from the beach. It was Willard. When Kate raised her lashes from the little leather case they sparkled with tears.

"Why did you ever come back?" she asked. "What made you keep it, Bart?"

Bart bent over her quickly. The veranda was secluded and private in that particular corner. No person down on the board walk could intrude on its seclusion. He took Kate's left hand in his own strong young ones, tanned by the sun of the orient, and slipped the ring into its old place.

"I kept it so I might put it back some day—like this, dear."

He kissed the ring and the fingers, and Kate's hand rested of its own volition on the bowed boyish head. The figure in gray flannels was close at hand. Bart lifted his head and looked her squarely in the eyes, a long, full look that admitted of no compromise even after two years' misunderstanding.

"Bart, I must tell him."

"I'll tell him," said Bart, and when Willard came up the step leisurely Kate stood with her face seaward, and Bart met him.

"You look awfully unsociable, you two," said Willard gayly. "Imogene just told me you were scrapping."

"It isn't a scrap," said Bart slowly. "It's a discussion on conscience, Kate's conscience. You see, Kate and I used to be engaged, two years ago, and Kate thinks that you ought to be told of it."

"Very considerate, I'm sure." Willard's face whitened. He did not look at Kate. "I think she might have extended the consideration and told me of it herself."

Kate turned instantly. There was a look in her eyes he had never seen before, a look of tenderness and gladness.

"I know I should have, Willard," she exclaimed. "But it was only Bart, and we were not really engaged yet, you and I, you know. I didn't think you would mind."

"I don't," said Willard sturdily. "It's only a matter of conscience, after all. Anything else?"

Bart slipped his arm about Kate's waist in proprietary fashion.

"Yes. We've just renewed the old engagement, and I think you ought to be told of it—as a matter of conscience."

Corroboration.

Each man around the store had told his tale of the "hardest rain he ever saw fall out of the sky." Tom Limkins was an easy winner with his of the great harvest rain of '93.

"It began with big drops kinder scatterin' like," he said, "then it got to a shower, and I just thought I'd crawl under the canvas on the reaper till it was over—knowed the team would stand—but, sir, when the lightnin' took to hittin' right at that binder I concluded to get out from there. I had a gallon and a half bucket on my arm, and I lit out for the mule shed. When I was about halfway there the thing begun to get heavy. I looked down, and if the blamed thing wasn't full of water I'm a"—

The lank individual who had been leaning against a barrel broke in:

"Well, now, I reckon that must 'a' been the day I am thinkin' about. What made me know it was rainin' some was seein' a flock o' wild ducks go over. Geats, them ducks had folded their wings and was just naturally paddlin'."

For the space of two minutes not a sound was heard save the purring of the cat asleep on the counter, then silently, with bowed heads, the crowd dispersed.—Woman's Home Companion.

Had Become Second Nature.

When Uncle Dave Barker had rounded out his half century in the employ of a great dry goods house he was summoned to the private office of the chief proprietor. "Uncle Dave," said the head of the house, "you have worked for this firm fifty years, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir," faltered the old man, wondering if he was going to be turned off as having outgrown his usefulness.

"Well, you needn't work any more, but you can come round every Saturday afternoon as long as you live and draw your pay. The little envelope will always be waiting for you."

Tears stood in Uncle Dave's old eyes as the head of the house, after shaking him cordially by the hand and wishing him many more years of life, bowed him out.

A few days afterward, however, he came round again.

"Mr. Stevenson," he said, "I've put in three of the hardest days' work of my life—doing nothing. If you don't mind I'll go back to my old place and kind o' hang around as if I was one of the men. Maybe I can help a little once in awhile, and I'll promise not to get in anybody's way."

Uncle Dave was allowed to have his way, and he went back to his old place, supremely happy.

The Blind Historian.

William Hickling Prescott, who was born at Salem, Mass., on the 4th of May, 1796, was the son of a prosperous lawyer, entered Harvard college in 1811 and graduated in 1814. Early in his college career he had his left eye blinded by a piece of bread playfully thrown at him by a fellow student, and the other eye soon became sympathetically affected. He traveled in England, France and Italy and then devoted himself to severe study, but it was not till the beginning of 1826 that he found the work of his life within the range of Spanish history. Fortunately his means were ample, so that he was able to procure the services of assistants and to live amid conditions of comfort. By constant habit he gained the power of carrying a great deal in his memory, and after he had revolved the whole of a chapter in his mind he quickly transferred it to paper by means of his stylus and an ingenious writing case especially constructed for the blind. He published his "History of Ferdinand and Isabella" in 1838, which carried his name across the ocean to the old world. This was followed by his "History of the Conquest of Mexico" in 1843, and of "Peru" in 1847. These gave him a great reputation.

A Fruitarian Diet.

A fruitarian diet consists of the fruits of trees (like apples, oranges, bananas and olives), the fruits of bushes (like currants and raspberries), the fruits of plants (like strawberries and melon, lentils and beans and cucumbers), the fruits of grasses (like wheat and barley and maize and oats), the fruits of nut trees (from filbert to cocoanut), together with some earth fruits (like potatoes), and a modicum of vegetables and salads. To these may be added butter, milk, honey and cheese, although their production is not so free from risk of contamination and animal infection as is the case with the products of the vegetable kingdom and the world of fruits. Grown under healthy conditions, with diseased specimens easy to detect and remove, it is far more possible to live healthily and well upon a fruitarian dietary than upon the products of the slaughter house.

Making It Plain.

In the lower Amazon country the temperature ranges about 87 degrees in the shade all the year round, says the author of "Ten Thousand Miles In a Yacht." At Manaos, 1,000 miles up the river, the temperature is six or eight degrees higher. Thermometers are little used in that country and little understood. So when a yachtsman returned down river and was asked by an official at Para, "How is the temperature at Manaos?" his reply, "Eight degrees hotter than here," elicited a stare of noncomprehension.

"At Manaos," said the yachtsman in explanation, "I used to wilt six collars a day; here in Para I only need three a day."

This was perfectly clear to the Brazilian, whose face lighted with understanding.

The Arab War Chant.

Captain Von Herbert describes how the sacred chant was sung by Osman Pasha's force in that last dreadful sortie from Plevna. He knows, for, as he says, "as a youngster of seventeen, being then in the Turkish service, I took part in the charge." It is a solemn four part chant for deep male voices, with intervals, the melody recurring again and again, of alternating harmonies hummed almost pianissimo, to the words "Alla Akbar," and then again rising "to a great outburst on the fifth note." There is more than a suggestion of plain song, that song which drifted westward from the east.—Pall Mall Gazette.

A Bad Break.

At a banquet held in a room, the walls of which were adorned with many beautiful paintings, a well known college president was called upon to respond to a toast. In the course of his remarks, wishing to pay a compliment to the ladies present and designating the paintings with one of his characteristic gestures, he said, "What need is there of these painted beauties when we have so many with us at the table?"

The End of Books.

What brings about the end of books? Is it fire, water, worms? As every ship launched is bound to be wrecked, every theater to be burned, the finis of the book is its reduction to ashes. What became of the Alexandrian library? Did the Saracens burn it in 640? There is this question asked: Was there any library at Alexandria containing 700,000 books? Gibbon inclines to the opinion that there was no such library. Canon Taylor insists that if there had been a library it was burned in the time of Julius Caesar. Tradition seems to indicate, however, that there was a library in the serapeum, by no means a large collection, but whether destroyed by Theophilus or Theodosius is not known. It looks as if the charge brought against the Arabs rested on no foundation. Explorations of Alexandria in 1895-96 show no traces of the serapeum. The seaport of Egypt was built on a damp foundation, and granting that there was a library, if not destroped by fire, then the papyri might have suffered from decay due to water. Books of today taken to India, to the southern states and to the West Indies perish through mildew.

Robinson Crusoe.

The second volume of "Robinson Crusoe," by Daniel De Foe, published on Aug. 20, 1719, was the first story published in England with illustrations. The illustrations consisted of a map of the world, in which the different voyages of the hero of the tale were delineated. The first volume of "Robinson Crusoe" was published in April, 1719, and became popular at once. A second edition was printed seventeen days after the first, twenty-five days later another followed, and a fourth was published on Aug. 8 of the same year. On Aug. 20 the second volume was issued under the title of "The Further Adventures of Robinson Crusoe; being the second and last part of his life and of the strange, surprising account of his travels round three parts of the globe. Written by himself. To which is added a map of the world, in which is delineated the voyage of Robinson Crusoe."

A Curiosity In Figures.

The following remarkable contribution to the curiosities of figures consists of two series of numbers, of which no description is necessary, as they speak for themselves. Perhaps there is no special profit in them, but they are worth preserving nevertheless:

1 times 9 plus 2 equals 11.
12 times 9 plus 3 equals 111.
123 times 9 plus 4 equals 1111.
1234 times 9 plus 5 equals 11111.
12345 times 9 plus 6 equals 111111.
123456 times 9 plus 7 equals 1111111.
1234567 times 9 plus 8 equals 11111111.
12345678 times 9 plus 9 equals 111111111.
1 times 8 plus 1 equals 9.
12 times 8 plus 2 equals 98.
123 times 8 plus 3 equals 987.
1234 times 8 plus 4 equals 9876.
12345 times 8 plus 5 equals 98765.
123456 times 8 plus 6 equals 987654.
1234567 times 8 plus 7 equals 9876543.
12345678 times 8 plus 8 equals 98765432.
123456789 times 8 plus 9 equals 987654321.

White Animals Can't Smell.

"Pure white animals," said a pet stock dealer, "have no sense of smell. Hence they are continually eating things that disagree with them, and in eight cases out of ten poison themselves and die. Pure white pigs should never be allowed to run loose in the fields and woods. For, without the protection of a sense of smell, such pigs, when they get out, eat all sorts of poisonous roots and berries and die off rapidly. "In Africa the white rhinoceros poisons itself by eating the euphorbia, and pure white sheep are difficult to rear because they are continually munching shrubs and grasses that don't agree with them."

Butler's Flag.

Feb. 21, 1866, General Benjamin F. Butler presented to congress the first genuine American flag, made of American materials by American labor, ever constructed in this country. Prior to that time all American government flags had been made of English bunting. Since then all our official flags have been the product exclusively of American material and labor. There were twenty-six stars in the flag at that time.